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GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.



Jay Gordon selling Groundcover News at the corner of Main and Liberty Streets on a U-M Football Saturday. Read about vendors' thoughts on these busy days downtown in "Football Saturdays: Students dream, vendors struggle" on page 7. Photo credit: Barry Chattillion.

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venmo



@groundcovernews, include vendor name and vendor #

Welcome to this special edition

In addition to the regular monthly issues, Groundcover News publishes one or two special editions each year bringing together outstanding materials that center around a particular theme. Although most of the articles included in this issue were written by University of Michigan freshmen students during their Fall 2021 semester, look closely for vendor voices interwoven throughout this edition.

Students began the semester diving into the archives of Groundcover News, reading a variety of pieces on topics ranging from housing justice and injustice, stories of homelessness, to local politics and more. They spent some time with Groundcover vendors in the classroom, talking with Joe Woods, Jay Gordon and Justen White during a panel about vendor experiences on the street. Some students returned to the Groundcover office later in the semester to spend time at paper sales interviewing vendors in more depth.

The project at the core of this special edition is making connections between U-M students and Groundcover vendors — two groups of the Ann Arbor community who will share sidewalks and street corners for at least the next four years. As Abigail Nives writes on page 2, most U-M students are incredibly disconnected from what lies beyond campus. Further, most U-M students don't even know Groundcover exists.

When they first arrived at the Groundcover office, most of our student contributors had been living in Ann Arbor for less than a month. Throughout this partnership with Groundcover News, the students were asked to look at Ann Arbor as a place not colored in maize and blue. They were challenged to understand and overcome the discomforts of privilege and identity. Still, they were surprised to find connections everywhere they looked. Above all, we hope they found membership in our community — one that you too, reader, are now a part of.

Lindsay Calka
Publisher

Town gown gap: Students disconnected from Ann Arbor homeless community

After just a month of my first year of the University of Michigan campus, I noticed a pertinent problem in the Ann Arbor community: students are encompassed in a bubble, uninvolved in the surrounding community. Specifically, we are unaware and disconnected from the staggering number of people experiencing homelessness right within our surrounding vicinity.

I've heard countless times from other students, "I didn't know there were so many homeless people in Ann Arbor." I've watched students blatantly ignore those afflicted by homelessness who try to talk with them on the street, and admittedly myself included, have made comments such as "I didn't know the homeless have Venmo."

I interviewed students ranging from first-years to seniors. Out of four students surveyed, only two students considered themselves educated on the root causes of homelessness. However, none of the four knew what Groundcover News was. One student passes those experiencing homelessness every day, but the others said they have rarely interacted with either newspaper vendors or those experiencing homelessness.

Why is there such a disconnect? Often when the possibility of homelessness is so far out of



ABIGAIL NIVES
U-M Student contributor

one's purview, it makes it difficult to understand how it can happen to anyone. This creates a systemic misunderstanding and thus makes it harder for students to resonate with those in need. If there were no disconnect, one would assume a rise of sympathy and understanding, which would lead to more engagement between the two communities. More would be done to support those experiencing homelessness and help break them out of this downward cycle.

For two consecutive years, the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor was ranked the nation's number one public university in The Wall Street Journal and Times Higher Education U.S. College Rankings. With that level of prestige comes expensive tuition and highly selective admissions, fostering a privileged student body. A 2017 study conducted by the New York Times reported that of the U-M student body, 66% come from families within the top 20% income

bracket, 9.3% from the top 1% income bracket, and only 3.6% from the bottom 20% income bracket. Once students realize that their fortunate upbringings molded their viewpoint of homelessness, they can start to look at it more holistically.

Often a disconnect is created between the wealthy and the homeless because the wealthy, surrounded by their multitude of safety nets, can't fathom how one could end up on the streets. Shockingly, "59% of Americans are just one paycheck away from homelessness," according to Charles Schwab.

Another reason there is a gap in understanding is that students are unaware of Groundcover newspaper vendors. I asked four students I interviewed if they believed those experiencing homelessness have smartphones: two students flat out said no, one said only in rare scenarios, and only one student said she believes yes, the majority do have them. I followed up and asked if they believe these groups have Venmo, and three students said no while one said possibly a low percentage. Thus although this is a small sample size and does not apply to every student, it can be inferred that there is a widespread misconception of what resources Groundcover vendors

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GROUNDCOVER

Mission

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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From the ground up: personal stories and observations

Often labeled as one of the best cities to live in within the United States, Ann Arbor has been afflicted with severe housing issues for decades. While Ann Arbor has a median household income above \$65,000, more than a fifth of its population lives in poverty according to U.S. census data in 2019. Students are included in population figures. And just miles away from the newly renovated college dormitories and apartment buildings scattered along South University Avenue, more than 2,000 residents in Washtenaw County have nowhere to call home.

Do we really know about Ann Arbor and the community around us?

Groundcover News vendors, independent contractors who sell the papers in and around the city, engage with locals on a daily basis, and put Groundcover into your hands, accrue some expertise and insights about the community. It is remarkable how their roles are so closely tied to every truthful aspect of this city, its people and its community. I was lucky enough to speak with two vendors, Joe Woods and Hosea Hill, and listen to their personal stories and insights about Groundcover and Ann Arbor.



Joe Woods, vendor No. 103, appreciates how Groundcover helps people support themselves and get back on their feet

Moving from South Carolina, Joe started as a vendor for Groundcover around ten years ago, when he found himself in severe spiritual situations and battles. It was one of the toughest and most disoriented times of his life. Not only did he need a job and source of income, but something meaningful and real to anchor himself after long fighting with his mental challenges. "I needed to talk to people. I needed to find things to do in my life," recalled Joe.

Luckily, Joe didn't have to wait too long until he found the perfect job: Groundcover vendor. Joe's previous experience and background in sales allowed him to settle smoothly into this new role, and he was soon delighted to see his sales figures growing, his income increasing and his mental situations gradually getting better.

Joe has a busy schedule. On most



VINCENT WEI
U-M Student contributor

weekdays and Saturdays, you will spot him at Liberty and Main, holding a pile of freshly printed Groundcovers and chatting with and pitching to the pedestrians passing by. Joe, like other vendors at Groundcover, has his habitual pitch and a set of sales techniques. Usually, Joe starts a light-hearted chat on random topics with his potential customers to put them at ease, and with his interpersonal skills and innate impulse to interact with people, he is extremely good at this.

"It's all about making connections," Joe concluded, "If you've already got an issue of Groundcover, get your friend one. Get your girlfriend one. Get your friend's girlfriend one. Everyone in the city should have a Groundcover."

While most vendors at Groundcover mainly offer the regular monthly papers in the streets, you can always get yourself a special edition from Joe. Joe is a big fan of the ten-dollar paper, though the price of these papers might get in the way of his sales. Yet, Joe is quite confident with his professional sales skills, "I have to work a little harder, but it's all about getting a ten-dollar bill in your hand," he laughed.

When Joe is not working, he is either doing volunteer work with Groundcover staff or helping other vendors with their sales using his expertise in the field. "A lot of vendors are homeless, and we are here to help them to support themselves and get back on their feet," he said.

Over the past decade, Joe has met and connected with numerous homeless or jobless people in the neighborhoods, and he is always encouraging them to get on board with Groundcover to rebuild their way up. In fact, a customer who he referred several years ago has now become a board member of Groundcover, as is Joe.

In Joe's opinion, Groundcover is one of the best and legal ways to earn money in this city. Having undergone similar life experiences, Joe understands that homelessness is never a choice for most people.

"Some homeless people are very educated, but they have no choice; [they] usually have internal issues going on," observed Joe. He hates to see people judging or disparaging the homeless community based on their status quo,

"The society is just messed up. People are divided but not united," Joe added, "That's why I want to work for Groundcover. The positivity. We're a part of the community, [and] we're here to help."



Hosea Hill, vendor No. 532, never thought he would be homeless or selling Groundcover News

Hosea Hill was one of the homeless people helped by Groundcover vendors like Joe. "[A vendor] named Larzell Washington helped me and introduced me to Groundcover," Hosea recounted. He had never thought he would become a vendor until this past summer when he became homeless. Before that, Hosea had his life all sorted out and had lots of focuses – he has earned his bachelor's degree in communications from Eastern Michigan University, worked at Zingerman's and was an Uber driver while preparing for the upcoming LSAT exam in order to go to law school.

Life has taken a drastic turn for Hosea since the COVID-19 pandemic due to people close to Hosea suffering from stress. From being a college student with a proper job to being homeless, and to eventually working as a vendor as well as a contributor for Groundcover, Hosea, nevertheless, seemed to be well-adjusted to his new role. "I'm just starting off recently, but I like what I'm doing, putting my ideas, writing, and stories to people," he remarked.

Hosea's "territory" is located at Liberty and South Ashley in a busy nightlife area near the Fleetwood Diner. He always sells during evening time, when people are going out for walks and friends are clustering in front of bars and restaurants on the street. "It's the busiest time of the day," Hosea added, "I dress nice, and people think I'm a nice person, so people come to me and want to know my stories because I might look different than other sellers that are doing this." This is what Hosea referred to as a "natural approach," by which he could easily engage in conversations with the pedestrians and sell a good number of papers.

Hosea's journey as a vendor did encounter its troughs. "It can be difficult to talk to people sometimes," Hosea was frustrated. "[There are] people with trust issues or mental health problems that

are concerned about me in the street, because they feel anxiety and fear because of me, [because] I'm a powerful and fairly young person with knowledge," said Hosea.

When we are addressing issues related to the homeless community, the mental challenges they face can be overlooked or regarded as less important. Tracing Hosea's unfavorable experience in the streets, it is certain that Ann Arbor needs more mental health treatment programs and experts that may benefit all members of our community.

Despite the grimness he sometimes gets from the job, Hosea's hope remains high for his future. As a writer for the newspaper, Hosea is excited about what he is able to contribute, "This gives a chance for homeless and low-income people to tell the truth, [enabling] people to look at the social issues and racial relations in Ann Arbor without being judgmental," Hosea concluded.

Into his fourth month of working as a vendor, Hosea has noted more positive signs from his work: there are more regular monthly buyers and supporters for the newspapers, and he manages to sustain himself with his earnings from both writing and selling.

"Groundcover [not only] has a huge impact on me, but a big-time impact on the community of Ann Arbor," Hosea said. A part of our community still believes that homelessness is a punishment for not doing the right things in one's life, Hosea suggested. There is still considerable stigma towards the homeless community in Ann Arbor. We've seen many incidents of society categorizing, dividing and segregating groups of people based on their social class, outlook, race and job. Even working for Groundcover is often taken as an implicit association with poverty and homelessness. "This is wrong [and] sad," Hosea affirmed, "We need Groundcover because it's so powerful that it can connect the poor and rich people in the community."

There's a long way ahead for Joe, Hosea, Groundcover News and the community of Ann Arbor. "People still don't really know what the elements of homelessness really are," Hosea admitted, "but we can definitely make Groundcover bigger to help people understand these elements."

As a college student from abroad, moving to and living in Ann Arbor has become one of the highlights of my life. The overflowing spirits of the university and amazingly diverse culture of this midwest college town is enjoyable to experience. Yet, it is sad to see how our society is also deeply divided on social issues like this. We need to be out in our community more. We can help. U-M can help. And Groundcover helps.

U-M Administration: Let Groundcover sell their papers on campus property

Prior to enrolling in my required first-year writing course, I wasn't aware Groundcover News existed. My sister has been a student at Michigan since 2018; I've read her articles in the *Michigan Daily* religiously for years. But when I asked her if she had heard of Groundcover, her answer was the same as mine: no. She brought it up with other writers at the Daily, and it seemed like the street paper was pretty unknown to students, even those in the realm of journalism.

The University of Michigan currently prohibits Groundcover News from allowing vendors to sell the paper on campus property. Because of this, there's a major disconnect between the street paper and University students. According to vendors, about 25% of paper sales come from students, even though they are purchased a block off-campus. Closing this gap would allow students to engage more in the Ann Arbor community and learn to be socially active in any area we end up in. U-M administration needs to alter its stance and allow Groundcover News vendors to sell on campus property.

Exposure to the paper could be incredibly influential for students at this time in our lives. We are living in a center for learning and personal growth, gaining the skills necessary to go out into the world and make major changes. However, in many respects, we are shielded from the societal issues prevalent only blocks off-campus. We need mediums to put our learning to action; this includes being active citizens and reading multiple types of news.

Allowing, and even encouraging, students to read Groundcover is a perfect way for the University to create a culture of involvement and constant learning. They already partner through classes like first-year writing seminars, but this only reaches a small sector of students. It's surprisingly easy to attend school here for four years but never really learn about Ann Arbor beyond the University of Michigan. The school can, and should, combat this; bringing Groundcover onto campus provides an interesting, relevant, and compact glimpse into real, accurate, local life around the school. Keeping it at arm's reach from students is in many ways counterproductive to the University's goals.

Many students are already involved or engaging with the *Michigan Daily* in some way. This does teach the habit of continuously learning about the place where you're living. But the Daily is a



MIA FRIEDMAN
U-M Student contributor

student paper, written entirely from the lens of people like us. It fails to give the broadened perspective of the larger Ann Arbor area, which is vital to fully contribute to our community. Are we really being active, socially-conscious citizens if our efforts don't extend past the bubble of campus life?

Many argue that working to get permits to sell on campus isn't a worthwhile investment of time and effort. Groundcover vendor, Jay, doesn't think students would even buy the paper if given closer opportunities.

"I prefer not to sell to students. I remember when I was in your position," Jay said. "You guys are on a fixed income."

While this is true, many students are eager for more opportunities to learn about Ann Arbor and have a spare two dollars in their wallet rather than a spare two hours in their day to help somebody out. Compared to the expensive clothing, food and housing rates in Ann Arbor, spending a few dollars a month for a newspaper isn't a huge cost. According to a Project Information Literacy study in 2018, 33% of college students consume print news-weekly. Groundcover News is currently only a monthly paper, making the monetary expense well worth the knowledge and awareness of the issues surrounding us.

People also commonly think older generations are more compassionate than the youth when it comes to sparing time, money and care for individuals who are homeless. But students and young people are currently leading the way in galvanizing huge groups to conduct major social change. The culture of our generation is to use our education to change the world, and that mindset goes beyond the classroom. Michigan already has 457 activism and social service organizations, and students continue to look for more outlets to make an impact. Groundcover has slowly become more engaged with U-M students in the past years, and the relationship with students has been positive for the paper.

"Over the past 3 or 4 years, students have gotten more involved because the University has gotten more involved," another Groundcover Vendor Joe said. "There is already interest; it's just about connecting it."

Aside from creating opportunities for students to read the paper and learn about Ann Arbor outside a U-M lens, connecting students to Groundcover will likely also help the platform develop and flourish, helping many writers' and vendors' living situations. While many Groundcover writers have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives, the paper welcomes writers from all walks of life, including students.

For students interested in journalism or social work, Groundcover provides an outlet for a meaningful experience that will have a direct impact on paper sales, thus helping vendors afford housing and necessities. Even if writing is just a hobby, Groundcover is a low-stakes alternative to some of the more competitive school-sanctioned platforms like the *Daily*. However, the barrier of not being able to sell on campus makes it difficult for students to know or learn about this opportunity. Allowing vendors to sell on campus works positively in both directions, students and vendors alike.

Are we really being active, socially-conscious citizens if our efforts don't extend past the bubble of campus life?

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"The paper works in so many different ways. It's an outlet for the people writing, they make a product vendors can sell and it's truly informative to the buyer," Jay said.

Groundcover provides necessary education to students about our impact on Ann Arbor and many of the people who live here. According to Redfin, the median sale price for homes in Ann Arbor is steadily increasing by 12.2% each year. There is no doubt the influx of college students and faculty that come here each academic year influences this rise.

The University draws a large out-of-state population, many of whom come from high-income families that are willing to pay the skyrocketing prices for off-campus housing. This, in turn, drives up housing costs for all Ann Arbor residents, despite economic status. The University is doing students

a disservice by disconnecting them from sources like Groundcover that expose their negative impacts on the community when they come here. Students can't continue to learn here unaware of the unforeseen byproducts they create. Even beyond that, Groundcover will at least educate students about the causes, misconceptions and experiences of homelessness, which isn't always properly represented in mass media.

"This is why people need the paper," Jay said. "People come up to me saying, 'you aren't homeless.' How are you going to tell me I'm not homeless? How would you know I'm not homeless? Because I have a phone?"

Of course, there are always risks associated with making the change and allowing outside sources to sell on campus property. Michigan is a public learning institution, and part of the rationale behind its current stance could be an attempt to keep students' learning community an unbiased and safe place. However, Groundcover's values align in many ways with the values of the University.

According to their mission statement, the University of Michigan strives to teach students to apply knowledge to create future leaders and citizens who will challenge current ideas. Groundcover strives to uplift diverse voices in an attempt to end poverty, homelessness and the stigmas surrounding it. Creating an easy way for students to read Groundcover is putting Michigan's goals into action; it will force students to confront their previous unconscious biases about poverty and homelessness and become better, more impactful citizens because of it.

U-M administration should reconsider its stance on letting Groundcover sell on campus. In the University of Michigan's own Vendor Code of Conduct — which outlines their requirements and parameters for selling goods on campus — they claim they will "strive to do business with vendors that provide a living wage for their employees." That's exactly what Groundcover does: provide both a voice and opportunity for income for homeless and underprivileged people. When it comes down to it, the possible growth and education from the proposed change far outweigh any possible detriments.

"There's always going to be some challenges associated with it," Joe said. "But I think we all wish there was more publicity with students. I would jump at the chance to sell on campus if I was allowed to."

Advocating for change: U-M Black Action Movement and CSP mission

The Comprehensive Studies Program here at the University of Michigan is revising its mission statement to expand the goals and focus back on the roots it was founded upon.

The Comprehensive Studies Program, or CSP, at U-M, is currently defined as a “premier student success program” with a mission to “engage, shape, provide academic guidance for, and retain undergraduate students from diverse populations with outstanding potential for success [here].” Despite thoroughly stating some of the many important aspects of CSP, this mission statement lacks goal clarity, room for growth, and acknowledgment of our program’s history.

The Black Action Movement of 1970, which led to the development of this program, is a key factor in our history that, without the few assigned readings and class discussions on the event, many participants who enter this program have little to no knowledge of. Along with that, the mission statement lacks clarity on the many benefits this program has to offer as well as numerous advantages being a part of it entails.

Currently, CSP requires participants to engage in a one-semester mini-course of diverse discussion sections and assignments. Thus far, we have completed research about our foundation’s roots (BAM) as well as engaged in weekly discussion class sections that encourage students to voice their opinions on a variety of diverse topics. The mission statement lacks key information on the founding of the CSP, which is why it is seeing a change.

The Black Action Movement, occurring in the early months of 1970, was a student-led strike that lasted several weeks. An alliance was formed between various Black Student Organizations along with a good majority of the student body, professors and staff members at the University of Michigan. The alliance held a number of protests, class disruptions, and marches to advocate for an end to racism at the University.

At the top of their list of demands, these individuals requested that the total percentage of black students at the University be actively increased to match the proportion of black individuals living in the state of Michigan at the time - 10%. A number of other demands were made, advocating for equal rights for black students and other minorities attending the University. Many of these specific



ASHLEY VALLANCE
U-M Student contributor

requests were met after weeks of protesting, leading to an end in the strike.

Despite this, the enrollment rate of 10% remained a “goal” rather than a “commitment”; this goal still has not been met, with the University currently sitting at a less than 5% enrollment of black students. Although this is upsetting information to discover, advocating for a new mission statement that advertises our history and helps clarify our role in anti-racism today is a step in the right direction for the CSP program.

Advertising is everywhere. When you view an advertisement and choose to invest in a company’s ideas or products, you gain an expectation for that organization’s specific service. The same can be said for the mission statement of a company or organization. Mission statements act as an “advertisement” for such organizations; so, when the mission statement of an organization you are involved in is being modified, it is important to understand why and to what. Fortunately for my research, it appears my peers are just as invested in this change as I am, as many have actually had input on CSP’s new mission statement.

After talking with Clayton Wickham, the professor for my specific class section of CSP, I was informed that I was not alone in my lack of clarity when analyzing our mission statement. He “felt the same way” when he first applied to teach for the Comprehensive Studies Program and stated that it wasn’t until well into his interview process that he “started to understand the value of CSP and the support the program provides to students.”

Our current mission statement lacks specificity on our very important background, the Black Action Movement of 1970, and some of our most valued goals: anti-racism and student advocacy. Clayton agrees that our mission statement “shouldn’t be so general that it doesn’t tell people outside CSP anything about the program.” Such feedback has prompted alterations to the mission statement.



The Black Action Movement led a massive strike in early 1970. Among the demands was a 10 percent enrollment of African-Americans by the 1973-74 academic year, a target that has never been achieved. Photo credit: Jay Cassidy, Michigan Daily reporter (1970).

As described by the CSP leadership team, the new mission statement in the works is being updated to “remain uniquely attuned to changing historical and social conditions and the ways these conditions impact our students.” The leadership team stated “our mission statement needed to reflect both our history and our ongoing commitment to student empowerment.”

Following the Black Lives Matter movement that began in 2014, seeing its peak in 2021, many people became increasingly aware of the effects prolonged oppression can have on individuals, organizations, and communities as a whole. An entire societal change was long overdue, and we are currently seeing the effects of that play out in our everyday lives. From something as simple as a new awareness of racial oppression to an idea as complex as altering company policies; people are speaking out against these injustices - finally. The Comprehensive Studies Program is no exception.

Personally, as a member of the Comprehensive Studies Program, I am looking forward to the positive changes that I expect to come regarding the mission statement change and growth of this organization. Acknowledging racial injustices is one thing, but advocating for a change is entirely different. As I encounter new information and experiences throughout my time here at Michigan, living in Ann Arbor, I look forward to expanding my knowledge of these social issues and advocating for them myself, and I’m sure many of my peers plan the same. Learning about the

history of this program has been an eye-opening experience for me and other students partaking in this class.

It is important to understand your history in any circumstance, especially so for one you owe gratitude. Each of us received a scholarship of some kind through this program. We were recruited. We owe the founders of the Comprehensive Studies Program’s hard work and dedication. Without their protesting and, in some cases, repercussions for these actions, many of us would lack the opportunities CSP allows us, including but not exclusive to scholarships, advising, and many other amazing benefits.

Racial inequality is an issue that has been tirelessly protested in the United States for many years, but there is still so much needing to be done in order for it to finally find the end. Something seemingly as meaningless as a mission statement can have a huge impact on racial injustices now and for years to come. Voicing your opinion on these matters may seem pointless; however, it could cause something as impactful as the Black Action Movement — after all, BAM began with students voicing opinions until their opinions turned into actions and actions to change. The Comprehensive Studies Program has significant importance that roots deep into Michigan’s history, and it’s important that our mission statement is modified to reflect that. Mission statements are a small, but important, way to change the world around you. Do your company/organization’s values align with that of your own?

Street talk with students, panhandlers and shopkeepers

Small business owners, first-year students and the homeless population all intersect in Ann Arbor. How do these individuals interact with each other? To capture the thoughts of some individuals in each of these three groups, I asked them questions about their feelings and interactions with the people in the other two groups.

Each year, some 8,000 new undergraduates come to Ann Arbor for the first time. What do first-year students think and feel when they see people experiencing homelessness? How does their past experience with people experiencing homelessness impact their interactions? Four University of Michigan students share their perspectives.

Zacary, a horticulture student, grew up being around people experiencing homelessness and said, "I treat them like any other person that I don't know."

Once, a person who appeared to be living on the street came up and hugged his younger brother. His mother became scared and angry, as any mother might react to a stranger presuming to hug her 10-year-old son, and began yelling at the man. This interaction left Zacary more reluctant and on edge when interacting with people who are experiencing homelessness. His basic outlook could be summed up by saying "I don't interact with them and I don't let them interrupt my day."

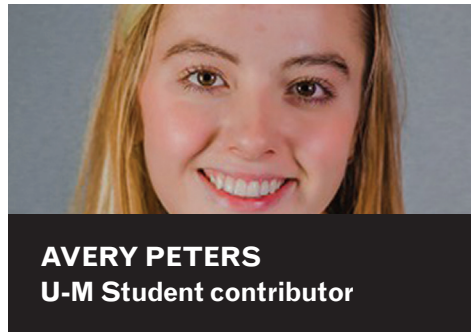
Syah, who grew up in Vancouver, Canada, is quite familiar with being around people who are experiencing homelessness. She knows the Vancouver streets where there are generally large numbers of people living rough. She avoids those streets and if she is driving in one of these areas, she makes sure her doors are locked and windows are rolled up.

Living in a city like Vancouver, Syah said, "it is unavoidable to see homeless people." She explained "[I] feel really bad and I know their life flipped in some way, but others will make me nervous when they stare at me."

Sometimes she feels like they are aggressive and possibly are high or drunk. Although she doesn't give them money, she will give them a granola bar if they say they are hungry. With this background, Syah says the homeless situation in Ann Arbor is not something unusual for her.

Morgan, who grew up in a small farm community, is not used to being around or seeing people living on the streets. She is uncomfortable walking past them and is "afraid that they will try to do something to her."

She purposely avoids going into stores that have homeless people in front of



AVERY PETERS
U-M Student contributor

them or in them. Morgan thinks there "should be places for them to go" and is disappointed that they don't try to improve their situation. Morgan doesn't give people who are experiencing homelessness any money because she thinks they will probably waste it on drugs or alcohol and then maybe they will harm her or someone else.

Micah, who is studying computer engineering, says that their physical appearance is the most striking. He has relatively little experience from his hometown with being around people who are experiencing homelessness. He doesn't like when they "approach me asking me for something like food or money as if they know me. It makes me uncomfortable because I don't know what to say or what their intentions are."

The one thing that all of these students had in common was that they were unsure how to interact with people who are dealing with homelessness. When they were asked for money or food, they didn't know how to respond and I think that is one of the driving factors of students being uncomfortable around the homeless population. Maybe there could be a requirement for all incoming students to take a course about homelessness and the best ways to interact with them to reduce some of the obvious tension felt between both groups.

What do people experiencing homelessness feel about interacting with students and store owners? It is common for people to lump all people living on the street together, so while one or two people don't adequately sum up the feelings for such a diverse group of individuals, these conversations can help reveal some individual perspectives.

I interviewed two men who were on the street in Ann Arbor outside of a coffee shop in the early afternoon. I would estimate that they were in their late forties and one man was holding a sign while the other wasn't. I introduced myself as a University of Michigan first-year student and told them I was working on this project for an English class.

Although I was a little hesitant to approach the men, they were nice and receptive to my questions. As I neared them, I gave them a croissant and a

dollar and I was happily surprised at how excited they were to talk to me and answer my questions.

The first man was sitting on a plastic bucket with an unwashed shirt and pants with stains. I noticed that he had lost many of his teeth and his hair was unkempt. His appearance made me think that he had been living on the streets for a long time. He had a pile of belongings next to him and had a sign saying he was homeless and that anything would help.

Once we started talking, he told me that sometimes coffee shops would give him water and hot coffee or tea for free, especially when it was cold outside. He said he would generally feel comfortable going into certain businesses and sitting inside as long as he wasn't disruptive or disrespectful towards the business or its customers. Overall, he said that he has peaceful interactions with business owners, the staff and the patrons.

He didn't seem to feel like there was a lot of tension between the groups. He was inquisitive about me and asked me some questions about my life and what sport I play at the University.

The other gentleman was a bit younger. He did not have a sign, but he was standing in a corner where two buildings meet and his belongings were spread in a few bags placed near him. His long hair and beard stood out to me and he had a large jacket that looked like many items were stuffed in pockets. He was a little more standoffish than the first man, but he was still kind and easy to talk to. He didn't feel like small business owners were very helpful. In his opinion, students and the people who come downtown have helped him more than businesses have. He said people are often generous and give him money or food.

The final group to consider is the small business owners who have many interactions with the homeless population. I talked to owners of two eateries that are near areas where I typically see people who are dealing with homelessness.

The first owner said that he tries to help people who come in by giving them coffee and allowing them to sit in the store. However, he has had enough negative interactions in the past that I could tell it was becoming a frustrating situation for him. He said it can be difficult if people are disturbing the customers or disrespecting the property in the shop or in the restrooms. In the past, some individuals have gone into the bathroom and left the water running in the sink until it flooded.

Also, he said he has to be sure that his patrons aren't disturbed or decide not to visit his shop again because of negative interactions with people who are currently dealing with homelessness. Negative situations like this have forced the business owner to ask the individuals to leave in order to avoid property destruction and sometimes resulted in police officers being called for help.

The second store owner had similar thoughts but was overall a little more comfortable engaging with people who are dealing with homelessness. He also would give water and hot coffee to people who needed it and was comfortable with people being inside the store as long as they were not yelling at customers or acting inappropriately. He didn't have examples of past negative interactions, so this individual seemed more likely to help someone who asked for a drink or a free sample.

Overall, I think that Ann Arbor has a relatively small population of people who are dealing with homelessness and that most people are not threatened by them and would like to help them, learn how to engage more appropriately with them, and find ways to contribute to solutions.

Gaining a new understanding of members in different groups is crucial in establishing a foundation for positive future interactions. Using empathy and compassion when in contact with each other will decrease tensions and build positive relationships.

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Football Saturdays in Ann Arbor: student's dream, vendor's struggle

Packed. Busy. Cramped. Crowded. Hour-long waits everywhere. Packs of people dressed in maize and blue more worried about the tailgate they're heading to than the dozen or so people they just plowed their way through.

Lively. Exciting. Joyful. Electric. Students, friends and family reuniting and cheering together for their favorite team. Crowds of people bursting with excitement. Some dressed in maize and blue outfits that have been planned for weeks, others in the same lucky game day t-shirt they've worn for years.

Whether you identify with the first description or the second, they both describe one iconic scene: a Michigan football Saturday. While most individuals would side with the latter of the two, game days are not perfect fall days for everyone. Gameday Saturdays serve as an obstacle for many impoverished Ann Arborites looking for ways to make a living. While they seem like a great opportunity for making money, Michigan game days are just the opposite according to Groundcover News vendor Justen White. They disrupt his daily routine and make it more difficult to make a sale. Despite what many believe about game days being profitable for Ann Arbor, the same cannot be said for Ann Arbor's Groundcover News vendors.

Justen White has been selling papers for Groundcover News for about eight months, and by now he feels like he's gotten his routine down. Most of his days are pretty laid back, and he gets to choose his own hours which he enjoys. You can find him selling his papers by the Starbucks on the corner of Main Street and Liberty Street. He likes to strike up conversations with people walking past, play feel-good music, burn incense and maybe even play a game of chess. Anything that makes people happy he's willing to do. For Justen, making someone else smile is more important than a sale.

While the Starbucks coffee traffic is good for Justen's sales, the relentless Michigan game day traffic is not as beneficial.

"People are always in a rush with no time to slow down and talk," Justen explains. "The large groups also make it harder to pitch ... it's more intimidating."

Although it may seem like selling Groundcover is the same as selling any other paper or product on the street, that's not exactly true. For



CAROLINE GRIN
U-M Student contributor

Justen, being homeless adds an extra challenge to the sales process, especially on game days. Ann Arbor locals may be familiar with Groundcover News, how it operates, who it supports, and other details about its mission. However, game day visitors from out of town usually are not.

Justen warns that "you have to be careful who you pitch to on game days because they may take offense. People may try to fight you or you'll be called names ... it's just not worth it."

Other factors that play into the struggle of selling on game days include the increased Ann Arbor traffic. One might think this would be an advantage, but the traffic is not where the Groundcover vendors would like it. The city of Ann Arbor directs cars in certain directions, sometimes steering them away from a vendor. The increased foot traffic also changes how people pass you. They may be more concerned about staying with their group than who they are passing on the street. For Justen, he needs to be close enough to a group or a person to feel like he can effectively sell, but on game days he's usually too far away to start a sale. Justen insists that he has to be within 10 feet to begin selling.

"Otherwise I have to yell in order to be heard and yelling can make someone come across as aggressive or in a negative light," he said. "I don't want either of that."

Even though game days pose many challenges to Groundcover vendors, they still find ways to make sales and strike up conversations. According to Justen, almost the only way to make a sale on a game day is to ask about the game itself.

"If I call out a 'Go Blue!' I can usually get someone," he admits.

Some of his other go-to strategies include asking who Michigan is playing or, if he sees someone out during the game, asking what the score is.

Justen explains, "The goal is to start a conversation. If I can get someone talking to me, I can usually get some-

thing going."

The reality of selling on a game day is that the vendors don't know how much they're going to make. They could stay out almost all day and end up with barely a handful of sales. Justen confesses that it's mostly "hit or miss ... sometimes people can be generous."

Despite the obstacles that he experiences on game days, Justen loves Michigan football. It's his favorite sport to watch, and Michigan is the only team he follows. Although he's never been to a game, if he got to choose only one to attend, it'd be Michigan vs. Michigan State at home.

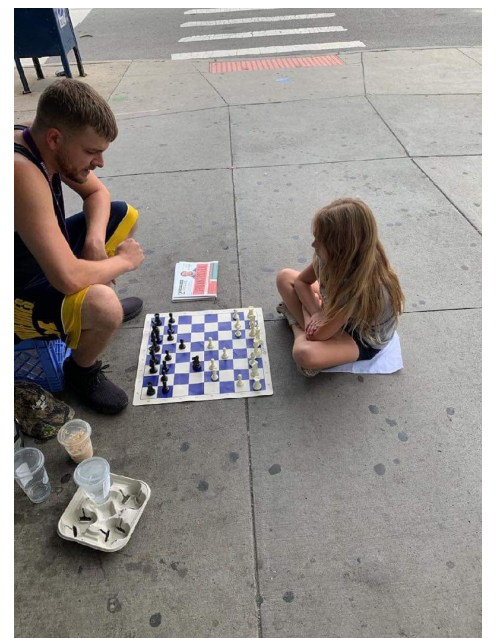
"I'd love to watch Michigan steamroll them!" he exclaims.

However, his one wish for game days is that people would adjust their attitudes when walking around Ann Arbor. He doesn't want to dampen the Michigan spirit one bit, but he wishes that people would open their eyes to others in the Ann Arbor community. Putting Groundcover sales aside, Justen would like people to be aware of how their actions affect the individuals around them. There's no need to name-call or put down anyone else. If everyone's gathering to enjoy the game, then let the day be about that: the team, the team, the team.

Justen's passion for Michigan football and Groundcover News has had him brainstorming ways to make them both come together. One of his ideas is to keep Main Street blocked off on game days. On a typical weekend day, Main Street is blocked off for pedestrians and expanded restaurant seating. This serves as a great location for Groundcover vendors to sell and make money. Having the street back open on game days disrupts the consumer-friendly atmosphere that encourages spending, affecting local restaurants, stores and Groundcover vendors. Keeping it closed off would not only allow vendors more space to sell on game days but also give restaurants more room to serve their customers, decreasing the wait times for restaurants and ultimately creating a less frantic game day environment. Justen also imagines kids playing football in the street.

"It all builds an atmosphere," he explains. "You want to create a place where people want to be."

As for the Groundcover paper itself, Justen is always thinking of ways to make it better for its readers. What he'd love to see is more information about upcoming events,



You can find Justen White, vendor No. 543, selling Groundcover and playing chess with passersby on U-M football Saturdays.

opportunities and Ann Arbor life in general. For example, having concert dates or venues in the paper would be a positive selling point, especially for college students. In regards to game days, adding a sports section with a special highlight on Michigan sports would be a great addition, as well as recommending local Ann Arbor restaurants for visiting fans to try. Justen wants to ensure that along with the current goals of Groundcover News, there is also a business view. What does the public want to see from the paper besides its stories?

"We need to highlight things that will attract new audiences to the paper," Justen explains. "Anything that could bring the Ann Arbor community together."

So while many individuals only see the shiny side of a maize and blue game day, keep in mind that the same can't be said for all of Ann Arbor. As homeless rates continue to rise in the post-pandemic world, everyone needs to support one another. We are all a part of the same team. Although game days are currently not very beneficial for some of the homeless community, there can be changes made. Keeping an open mind, having a conversation with someone new, or simply throwing a football around in the street are all steps in the right direction. As Ann Arbor and Groundcover News continue to collaborate, it won't be long until we can all enjoy a fall Saturday together, unanimously cheering "Go Blue!"

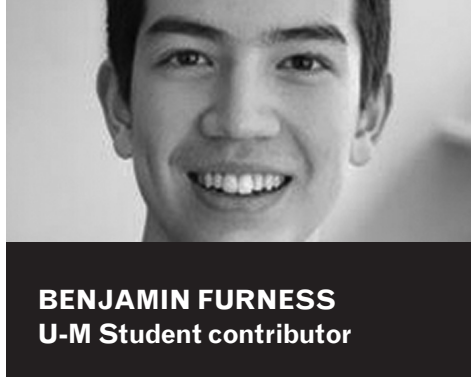
Down but not out — local labor shortages frustrate students

Where did all the labor go? As COVID-19 restrictions ease up, the labor problem has become a common issue around the nation, and Ann Arbor provides a prime example. With the constant bustle along the streets of Ann Arbor, insufficient labor becomes excruciatingly clear. Nowhere is this more prevalent than with the Magic Bus system. The Magic Bus system has transported University of Michigan students around campus for decades, giving students constant access to all that the university has to offer. These buses have always run smoothly, allowing students quick transportation and reliable arrivals. However, recently students have struggled with the buses.

Anticipation and excitement hung in the air over Ann Arbor as students rushed to their first classes, anxious to make a good impression on the first day, August 30, 2021. The famed university town had lacked the energy that was so natural before the pandemic struck. Slowly, classes started bustling with students, streets started to come alive, and buses started to fill up. Oh yes, buses filled up.

Hardly half a day into the new school year and the bus system became the biggest topic of complaint, the most annoying inefficiency and enormous frustration. Buses departed packed like sardines, drivers were forced to shut the doors on eager students, and students' plans were often delayed.

Students started showing up late to



BENJAMIN FURNESS
U-M Student contributor

class. They had to arrive at the bus stop at least half an hour before class to reliably catch a bus. With fewer buses and longer waits, the number of students on foot rose steadily, clogging up intersections and causing frustration for Ann Arbor residents and visitors.

The U-M Magic Bus system has had an extreme labor shortage. Drivers are working endless shifts which leads to more "out of service" buses because the drivers need breaks. Throngs of people gather at the Pierpont Commons and the Central Campus Transit Center.

The university has done all they can to recruit drivers: "We've increased driver pay and have redoubled our recruitment," said university spokesperson Kim Broekhuizen. However, even with the increased effort, the problem persists. Broekhuizen addressed the issue saying, "One area where we've been hit the hardest is in the recruitment of temporary and student drivers."

All kinds of advertisements appear

around campus for student bus drivers. However, as students return to campus, very few want to work for the bus system.

Students' frustration has only increased and the university's attempts to stifle the issue have had negligible effects. Zack Vega, a freshman in Baits Housing, was waiting for a bus with a couple of friends as they tried to make it to the Michigan football game on time. After waiting 20 minutes a bus finally pulled up only to be swamped by the group of at least 100 students desperate to make it to Central Campus. Zack and his buddies decided to wait it out, and a few seconds later another bus approached. Zack and his friends almost missed this bus too, but they squeezed into some standing room and held on as the bus trundled toward the stadium. Experiences like these have been all too common in the opening weeks of the school year.

This failure in the university bus system represents the larger systemic issue shown in the greater Ann Arbor area. The labor shortage in the city is stagnating its efficiency. Ann Arbor has always been busy as a university town. Tourists come from all over the country, and students stay out late partying into the night. However, the recent labor trends are affecting this atmosphere in negative ways.

Restaurants cannot seem to retain any workers, causing havoc in downtown Ann Arbor. Kate McCarthy, a freshman at Cornerstone University came into

town to visit her boyfriend and enjoy a weekend in Ann Arbor. As they walked through the busy streets, the economic hardship of the city became clear. Store after store had "Now Hiring!" signs hung up. After visiting a few busy, low-staffed restaurants, they ended up at Starbucks where they had a hearty dinner of breakfast sandwiches and coffee. Although Kate and her boyfriend did not mind a peaceful dinner in the homey atmosphere of Starbucks, this clearly displays the faltering conditions in Ann Arbor.

Sweetwaters Coffee & Tea on East Liberty Street faced an employee surplus before the pandemic, but today they cannot find workers as their customers continue to increase. General manager Trina Smith commented, "It's very interesting to see how Covid came, and during that time how slow we were and how bad sales were. And now, a year later, we are reaching record sales. And we don't have enough staff." This contrast between the current situation and the pre-pandemic circumstances is typical.

Struggles have also been evident in university organizations like Michigan Dining and Michigan Housing. LSA junior Anthony Marx described the situation with Michigan Dining and Michigan Housing saying that residence hall activities have been limited and there are fewer resident assistants. Additionally, dining hall hours have been cut,

see **SHORTAGE** next page ➔

My military story

In 2008 I joined the U.S. Navy. I chose the Navy because, honestly, I felt it would be safer than the Marines or Army. I figured, "I can get shot at home, no need to go abroad to get hit up." This is the story of when I realized that this is really the military.

I started bootcamp in January 2008 and after nine weeks I had to do another eight weeks at culinary school. Only then did I hit Naval Station Norfolk in June. Immediately upon seeing my ship — which was a Guided Missile Destroyer — I was in awe. This was the real thing. In bootcamp you know it's play. You know there can be a "training time-out" if someone or something happens that can cause injury. This was it. People had told me to treat it like a job. "It'll be easy," blah blah blah. So that's how I went about it.

When I met my chain of command,



JAY GORDON
Groundcover vendor No. 533

they informed me that we would leave in five days for a 10 day trip to Savannah, Ga. then in August we would be leaving for a six month deployment to the Mediterranean. First deployment overseas in less than six months. I was beyond nervous, but hey, I signed up for it.

Fast forward to the Savannah trip where I got my sea legs. I was in the middle of the Atlantic and all I could see

was water. Right away I realized how small I was in the world — that meant understanding that if I fall over, that's probably it.

Sidenote: this is also why I never went near the edge. Ever.

While out at sea we ran drills and practiced three to four days out of the week to prepare for some kind of casualty. When a disaster occurs, especially on a ship my size (a crew of nearly 290 people), everyone is required to help. I was a cook by trade, but with training you learn security, damage control and more. 'All hands on deck' is a real thing.

One day while floating along in the ocean, I was walking down the serving line making sure it was clean, when all of a sudden alarms started ringing loudly. Everyone was running in panic; I went to help secure hatches but was pushed out of the way by the first

commands going to mount their guns. A plane was incoming fast and we were near Russian waters. Now, in the bootcamp they show you pictures and videos of military attacks, but I had no idea I was ever going to be in one. As we all braced for impact, the captain's voice came over the land speaker:

"Situation secured. Resume normal activities."

Immediately everyone just started putting up the equipment they had taken out, hinging hatches, all of this like nothing happened. I got the news that an old retired couple were out flying their small plane for a flight when they saw our ship.

Being curious, they came close and almost became the curious calf. Luckily, someone on our ship was a translator and got them to turn around. That was the first "action" I saw, thankfully.

Insider comparison of EMU and U-M Dining

"I have to say Michigan students are more likely to get hit by cars than Eastern students. Really. Oh yeah, but it's not their fault. The schools have different urban designs and there are not cars blowing down Eastern campus like there are here."

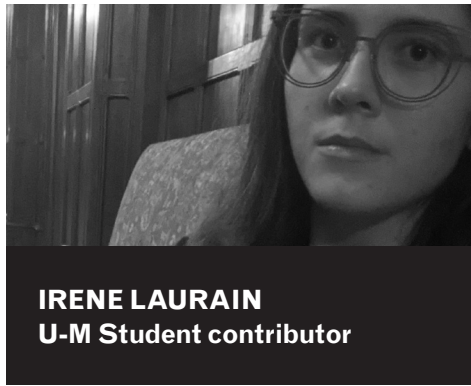
This is Kevin, always honest and in solidarity with humanity. He spent his life on these two campuses. If anyone knows which kids get hit more it's him. Eastern and Michigan dining halls are not that different from their roads. Eastern's dining privatization provides protection while Michigan's dining halls are arguably overly integrated into the university.

The universities have taken divergent approaches to dining in recent years. By interviewing and reviewing Eastern and Michigan with long-time worker Kevin, hopefully, I can come to a better understanding of Eastern and Michigan's past, where they are today, and what the future may hold.

Eastern's campus dining is consolidated, offering a classic dining hall called "The Commons" with a rotating menu and various mock restaurants and coffee shops such as the Eastern Eateries or Grille 734. (For further information as to what is open right now, go to dineoncampus.com/emu.)

Michigan dining has many large dining halls in dorms such as North Quad or Mosher-Jordan, better known to students as 'Mo-Jo'; however not all MDining halls have been consolidated. Today, two small residential dining halls remain: The Lawyers Club and Martha Cook.

Kevin does food placement, moving plates from the kitchen dummies to hot burners "keeping the food coming". Often you'll see him standing against the wall, empty dumbwaiter to the left and rinsed rags to the right tipping his head at every passerby as they bring him their dish. He works at the Martha Cook Building and has been in the food and beverage industry since he was 16, not his first job. His time at Eastern was 1992-2009/10. I must have sounded surprised since he clarified he "had a few seasons as a temp". In his



IRENE LAURAIN
U-M Student contributor

seventeen years, he worked weekends and as if still worn out, chuckled "I didn't take off my apron till 9:00 pm after the kids were done with all their practices."

Further down Washtenaw Ave and the timeline, Kevin has worked since 2016 in Martha Cook Dining, though he did have a break during COVID-19 as he was at high risk. Between serving his time at Eastern and Michigan, he briefly worked at the University of Michigan hospital.

I met Kevin Chambers the first day I moved into Martha Cook. He stood with a blue cap perched, mask tucked, and an apron pulled beside our three-meter wood table, chatting with my friend and me for dinner. We had such a wonderful time we hardly noticed the thirty minutes that had passed, or that we had become the last ones in the dining hall.

Our encounter for this article was similarly engrossing. Throughout the course of our fifteen-unexpectedly-turned-fifty minute interview, the three ladies in the room had gotten quiet and I hadn't noticed. At this point of our interview in the red room, he paused, looked right at me, and said, "Once you're into the UMich system and they find out you're good at what you do, they'll keep you around. That's true for you students too."

He continued, eyes returning to their reflective state, "You may change departments; I went from working at the hospital right to here. So long as you have all the qualifications, or even better if you're overqualified."

Remaining within the University of Michigan system is one of the biggest distinctions between Eastern and Michigan dining. One of the University of

Michigan's biggest selling points is how interconnected it is within its departments and that is true for staff, right down to dining. Eastern however has worked towards outsourcing.

Before 2016, what distinguished Michigan from Eastern dining was Eastern's strong workers' union and higher pay "not that UMich pays pennies either." However, since the implementation of new vendors, new EDining staff no longer receive all applicable benefits as their fellow employees who were hired directly by Eastern Michigan. Since then "privatization is encouraging absorbing and early retirements of old dining staff" said Kevin.

Eastern opted for privatized food service that incorporates everything from a campus Starbucks to Chick-fil-a. Because of this, Eastern students have perhaps more appealing food than Michigan students. Honestly, find me a student at U-M who doesn't see the appeal of having their Mcard work at Starbucks.

The primary difference, to Kevin, is not these fast-serve and recognizable names, but rather the name Chartwells, the private company managing Eastern's dining. MDining has no outsider handlers. Michigan is responsible for the hiring and training of all dining staff members. Kevin believes that MDining's tie to the Michigan name provides the students a higher level of confidence. The universities have different types of dining halls, but perhaps the students are similar.

While working over 20 years serving students their meals Kevin noted the obvious. "Students are the same wherever they are. They are smart, lack common knowledge, curse, lack courtesy and are bad at crossing streets." As the student interviewing him while gazing out at the crosswalk, it felt accurate. He continued, but referenced Michigan students saying, "They can be snobs about their food. They have the right to be. Their parents send them here expecting them to be taken care of and safe."

Sting.

"All I do is handle the food upstairs, making sure you all keep getting fed. I am

just serving you what's already yours."

However, as a student who has eaten at nearly all of the UMich dining halls (Twigs at Oxford and the Lawyers Club are the last two on my list!), based upon recent Martha Cook Dining experiences I had to question if Michigan students are really comfortable in their dining halls or if this is an ideal.

As I inhaled, the question forming in my mind, Kevin clarified "food service at MCB (the Martha Cook Building) is not indicative of all Michigan dining. This is a one-of-a-kind place."

How much do students owe their comfortability to the university? Personally, I have had varying experiences at each dining hall, yet like Kevin said, ultimately my comfort level rises with accountability levels. That accountability comes down to the relationship between students and dining, then dining and university. I wanted to write this, to feel more comfortable while dining. Plus I'm curious as to what's going on at Eastern as Eastern students likely are about Michigan.

When it comes to it, Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti have a certain oneness. Slick Ypsi-high students coming to Michigan frat parties, and MDining staff working double shifts and commuting on the bus down Washtenaw Ave, neither community is separate. Even Kevin and his wife have worked at both schools. While he's worked in dining, she has worked at both University of Michigan's League counseling students and at Eastern approving educator licenses "and you know Eastern used to be the school of educators in our State, and it still approves educators' license to teach."

I bet there are professors and staff at U-M who are graduates of Eastern teaching school. Kevin and his wife still work at the two schools "switching places when they need to mix things up," he jokes.

Our universities have a lot of shared history, right down to the staff, and we all have to eat. The cities are not twins but the two are closer to family than one might think, even if there are differences in dining halls or Michigan students are more likely to get hit by cars.

➡ SHORTAGE from last page

especially on the weekends. Marx hopes that students will start to work more and things can get back to normal soon. He encourages students to work in these industries, commenting that they would not only be good work experiences but also support the university.

Emily Blunberg, Michigan Daily reporter, spoke on the issues saying Ann Arbor businesses are facing

employee shortages with restrictions easing up and customer numbers increasing. "This trend also exists nationwide, as labor shortages continue to challenge business owners," Blunberg said.

Economist Linda Tesar points to Covid concerns as an issue because people do not want to mingle with unvaccinated customers. Tesar also cites that many people have started waiting for jobs with higher pay. "Some workers could be covering their

expenses with COVID stimulus support and therefore have time to look for the job they really want," Tesar admitted.

How long will it last? How long will packed buses and frustrated students be the norm on campus? How long will long lines and overcrowded stores fill downtown Ann Arbor? Many experts say the labor problem is one that could remain through the entire school year, and although that seems like a long time, it can be tolerated. Ann Arbor can adjust. Students are beginning to adapt

and plan according to the bus schedule, and citizens are getting used to longer excursions for a family dinner.

No one should place blame for the packed buses leaving Pierpont Commons or the long wait times at Chipotle. Ann Arbor leaders do not like the current situation, and they constantly work to improve it. Those who are working continue to loyally fulfill their roles, and everyone else needs to take a step back and have an attitude of appreciation and gratitude.



Wolverine football: a game and a culture

"3rd and 4 for the Wolverines. McNamara hands it off to Corum, Corum breaks through around the outside! He's at the 30, the 20, the 10, Touchdown Wolverines!" The echoes can be heard miles from the stadium. The screams fill the air as maize and blue illuminate the sky above the whole city of Ann Arbor.

The University of Michigan football program represents not only a game but a culture. You won't talk to a single person in Ann Arbor that does not know about Michigan football. It is the culture of Wolverine football that brings the entire city together into one community, with over 100,000 fans in one stadium, representing one team. Without this incredible football program, our beautiful city of Ann Arbor would not be the same. People come to this city solely for the purpose of going to football games and experiencing the camaraderie that it brings to the people of Ann Arbor.

This year the team has been performing at an extraordinary level, and it has helped bring the Ann Arbor community even closer. After starting the season unranked, the Wolverines are now ranked in the top 10 in the country according to the latest AP polls and started the season with an outstanding record of seven wins and no losses.

Being a fan of the Wolverines is not easy. Year after year the season starts out strong, but then Michigan loses in a nail-biter game that they were supposed to win and the season goes downhill from there, ending with another loss against our biggest rival, Ohio State.

However, each year, the team comes



back fired up and the community supports them. This year Michigan has one of the best running back duos in the country. Hassan Haskins is a power running back who can pick up chunk yardage on every single one of his attempts, and Blake Corum can breakthrough on any given attempt all the way to the house. This running back combination, along with their blockers, is almost unstoppable against any defensive set they face.

Although receiving is not the spotlight of the Wolverine offense, they still put up consistent passing numbers as well. After an underwhelming season during the heart of the Covid-19 pandemic last year, Michigan's starting quarterback, Cade McNamara, has come out hot in the first games this season. Despite losing Ronnie Bell, who was supposed to be the top receiver for the Wolverines this year, to a gruesome injury in the first game of the season, McNamara has had success finding other targets such as Cornelius Johnson, the leader in receiving yards for the Wolverines this season.

The success does not stop at the offense; the key to the season so far has been the unstoppable Wolverine

defense. This defense has been the reason why the Wolverines are nearly undefeated, making so many game-winning plays and stops each week. When the Wolverines played Nebraska in a crazy Saturday night game, with under three minutes left in a tie game at Nebraska's home stadium, Nebraska had the ball and Michigan forced a fumble at Nebraska's own 30-yard line on a pivotal third down and one-yard play, setting up Jake Moody's game-winning field goal for Michigan. The defense continues to win games for the Wolverines, putting the offense in the perfect positions to execute. On average, the Wolverine defense has allowed less than 200 receiving yards each game and has forced numerous fumbles, interceptions and sacks.

The team has been performing at an extremely high level, and of course, head coach Jim Harbaugh must be recognized for the team's performance. Although Harbaugh has certainly had many doubters over the past few years, it is hard to talk badly about him after this team's great winning streak. With big games left in the season, Harbaugh still has a lot to prove, but he is backed by his fans this year.

One of the best things about Ann Arbor is the variety of people that root for the Wolverines. You could run into a student at the University of Michigan decked out in maize and blue on the way to the game. You can also be walking down the street and see a 67-year-old man who owns a local Ann Arbor business and has lived in Ann Arbor for his whole life with his face painted half maize half blue. There are diehard

Michigan fans with so many different backgrounds wherever you look. The best part about being a Wolverine is sharing the same passion for Michigan football with people coming from a whole different world from what you live in.

Ann Arbor is home to so many different types of people and that is what makes the community even more special. When you wake up at seven in the morning on a noon game day, the city is already roaring and ready for the best day of the week. Michigan football builds a community so strong that it does not just give people something to watch, but it gets people through the week. Hardworking locals live for Saturdays, and even when you exit the U-M campus and walk down the streets of the city and suburbs, you see hundreds of "Go Blue" flags and fans crowding the streets in Wolverine colors. When a 67-year-old local and a college student can bond and have the same energy over a football team, you know that Wolverine football is special.

The roars and cheers from the stadium, the band playing The Victors Valiant, and the Maize and Blue throughout the whole city of Ann Arbor foster a close-knit community. People cannot understand what Ann Arbor is all about until they visit on a game day weekend. There is no other experience like an Ann Arbor game day. Ann Arbor is certainly not the biggest city in the world, but it feels like it on game days when the whole city is awake and ready for another monstrous performance from the Michigan Wolverines.

Who's really getting paid? Will name, image and likeness compensate college athletes?

College athletes train most of their lives to make it to the collegiate level. It takes natural talent, grit, determination and a relentless work ethic to become a high-level athlete; and for many kids around the country, it's their only way to advance their education past high school. The challenges do not end with the scholarship.

The transition from high school to college is difficult for anyone. Learning to manage schoolwork with a social life has a steep learning curve. Adding a vast sport commitment into the mix increases the challenge.

Christian Tanefeu, a freshman on the University of Michigan wrestling team, shared some of his early experiences with me: "In the beginning, it was super stressful. Right now we're going through midterms and it's pretty difficult to manage it all."

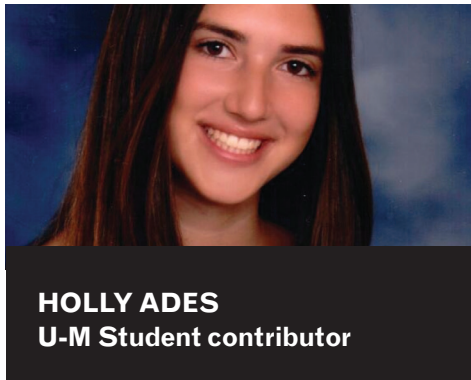


U-M wrestler Christian Tanefeu has to balance 20 hours of practice a week, in addition to frequent traveling for competitions. This is the experience of many college athletes.

I spoke to Tanefeu about his practice schedule and he noted they will be bumped up to 20 hours of practice per week during the winter season. An additional worry for student-athletes is that they have to miss class to travel to other schools to compete. Tanefeu shared that fortunately, "We have tutors available to us and we have advisors, so we're definitely given a lot of resources. For certain classes though, like my computer science class, the department isn't sure if we can have tutors yet because they don't want us copying the codes."

As the semester goes on and the wrestling team moves into their in-season routine, the athletes will somehow have to figure out how to make up missed class time.

Along with the stress of keeping up with schoolwork while playing a college sport, there is little time to have a social life, let alone a job. Many college athletes come from low-income



HOLLY ADES
U-M Student contributor

homes. While athletes' tuition and meal plans may be free, there are still many expenses left to be covered.

According to procon.org, "Tuition shortfalls amount to thousands of dollars per year and leave about 85% of players to live below the poverty line." Tanefeu stated that it would be "almost impossible" to keep a job while also playing a sport. Many athletes are left vulnerable to food insecurity while still expected by their coaches and institutions to perform well.

A new rule in the NCAA, (NIL, which stands for name, image and likeness) allows college athletes at any level to monetize their success through endorsements and sponsored content. Previously, college athletes were prohibited from accepting any form of outside payment. This was done to protect the "amateurism" of college sports; the concept that college athletes are not professionals, and therefore do not need to be compensated. If these rules were violated, the athletes could have been suspended and lost their eligibility. Now, there will be barely any restrictions as to the amount of money an athlete can receive. Some examples of how an athlete can now earn money are through sponsored social media posts, training lessons and summer camps, and merchandise sales.

Tanefeu thinks this is a major opportunity for all athletes. Athletes will also now be able to hire agents to help them navigate the tricky world of contracts. While schools won't be paying their athletes at all, they still have oversight of their athletes' deals and can object to them if they conflict with a previous agreement. For example, if a University of Michigan football player were to make a deal with Adidas, the school could reject the deal because the school is already endorsed by Nike's "Jordan" brand. The state government also has oversight and can choose with which industries their state's athletes can or cannot sign a deal. For example, "In Illinois, the law allowing student-athletes to earn NIL compensation doesn't allow for the

endorsement of sports betting, tobacco, alcohol and adult entertainment, among other products." Although college athletes don't have completely free-range, the NIL has opened up countless compensation possibilities.

One major benefit of the NIL law is curbing the NCAA and universities from unfairly profiting off of their athletes. College athletes work hard and push themselves every day, putting their bodies, future careers and years of their lives on the line. They generated billions of dollars for the NCAA — \$18.9 billion in 2019 according to the NCAA — and received no financial compensation.

The National College Players Association Executive Director Ramogi Huma stated, "Many of these athletes are Black and from low-income homes — the NCAA treats them like disposable university property."

For many student-athletes, playing a sport is the only way their families can afford to send them to college. Often athletes leave before they have graduated to play professionally so they can make some money and provide for their families. With the NIL law, some of these athletes may be able to stay and finish their education while also being able to send money home.

Colleges and universities reap immense profits. The University of Michigan brings in tens of millions of dollars in revenue from its football program. Part of that money goes to funding other sports programs that don't collect revenue and another part goes towards the 85 scholarships that are permitted to the team. The head coach, Jim Harbaugh, is paid 4-8 million dollars per year (the fourth highest-paid college football coach in the country) and our assistant coaches earn six-figure salaries as well. It seems absurd that the players don't receive a penny.

While the NIL can help student-athletes in many ways, there are also many arguments against it. Some argue that a scholarship is enough compensation for athletes. Scholarships can cover tuition, room and board, and course-related books. Each year, Division I and II schools give out more than \$3.6 billion in scholarships to over 180,000 athletes. Although this sounds like the athletes get plenty, this money does not cover all of the extra costs that come with being a college athlete.

Very few of the 180,000 college athletes are widely recognized across the country and will receive big brand



Last summer, Cade McNamara was the first student athlete to be paid for his Name/Likeness/Image in cryptocurrency.

deals. The most famous quarterbacks and men's basketball players around the country will likely be the main beneficiaries of offers from big-name brands. While other college athletes can make a smaller amount of money with local deals and teaching lessons in their local community, this won't amount to much in comparison to the deals that could be done with Nike, Gatorade and other international sports brands. We will likely end up with the top one percent owning almost everything, and everyone else with almost nothing. Sound familiar?

For the last four decades, the United States has had an issue of income inequality. The top 10% own vastly more than the bottom 90%. Unfortunately, the income gap between the rich and the poor has been growing for decades. Emmanuel Saez, an economist at the University of California Berkeley, analyzed data that showed that the top 10% of earners on average make more than nine times as much as the bottom 90%. Additionally, the top 1% on average makes more than 39 times more than the bottom 90%. I expect similar results from the new NIL rules.

The very top level of college athletes at top-level schools will earn the lion's share of brand deals, while every other athlete will likely be in the same position as before the law came into play. In order to more fairly allow collegiate athletes to earn the money, they desperately need to make ends meet, perhaps some other form of compensation should be considered like stipends. This way, all college athletes in the same sport would earn the same amount of money. As a society, we need to work towards equality for our college athletes and the country as a whole.

Don't Stress for Success

Mental health issues have come to the forefront of many recent conversations. There is raised awareness about the topic and for a good reason. Anyone can face mental health challenges. But recently there has been a sharp incline in students' mental health issues that need addressing.

Students often face significantly increased stress levels around finals and midterms. This is often overlooked or even disregarded. When I initially heard that one in three students suffer from mental health issues related to school each year, I was shocked. And the number has been rising.

Just hearing the word "finals" can cause some students to turn their heads in dismay. As studying often takes up the majority of their time, it becomes simple for students to prioritize their grades over just about anything. Monica Jianette, a peer counselor at Michigan's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), said, "with being so busy I



EVY BISBIKIS
U-M Student contributor

think it's common to sometimes forget about prioritizing your mental health."

After finishing my first round of college midterms, I finally understood how natural it is to stress and how effortless it is to put yourself down. As I became more aware of those tendencies in myself, I started to pay attention to other students' behaviors and appearances: I could see the stress on their faces as I passed by – a strained look in their eyes accompanied by a tense jaw and slanting eyebrows. This was not something that I perceived in just a few, but rather the vast majority of students showed some physical indications of stress. This behavior is not uncommon around finals and can even be shown by the increase in demand for CAPS services.

"I know that around finals season CAPS gets a lot more requests to meet with a counselor just because it's an emotionally taxing time for students," said Jianette. It's normal to feel these effects, but it's important to make sure they don't persist and get help if needed.

From what I've noticed, students often avoid directly talking about mental health issues. Maybe because it's a sensitive topic or because students often feel as if they do not have support, but either way, mental health is often pushed to be the last of people's concerns. This is especially true during the school year. We may get a two-day fall study break, which initially started to encourage mental health improvement, but this doesn't directly address the issue at hand. It seems like students are put into a never-ending cycle: finish your work, do well on your finals, and then do it all over again next semester.

I do understand that this is how school is supposed to work, it's how most schools have been working for decades, but that doesn't change the fact that it causes teenagers a great number of mental health issues. 39% of college students experience a significant mental health issue, which corresponds to suicide being the second

leading cause of death for young adults. Depression, anxiety and stress are currently at an all-time high for students and will not change if we don't address the situation promptly.

At the university level, Jianette says she would "love to see Michigan collect more data related to CAPS so they can make changes where needed." She also suggests, "investing more money and resources into improving CAPS because some students haven't had the best experiences there in the past."

Moreover, it's important that we, as a society, change the way mental health issues are viewed in order to help make an improvement. It is discouraging that we often feed into the stigma of mental health issues without even knowing. We often believe that people with mental health issues are dangerous, that they only have themselves to blame for their disorder, and it is embarrassing to get help. This is not the case and people struggling with mental health issues commonly get discouraged by these stigmas.

Sarah, a former U-M student, initially found it tough to get help for her disorder. She said, "I didn't want it to appear

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Essence of school spirit uplifts A2 community

As the leaves fade from green to yellow and the scent of fall aromatizes the crisp air, the beauty of the environment complements the vivacious spirit that never fails to present itself throughout the city of Ann Arbor. Looking through the windows of the never-ending stores on State Street, maize and blue prevail. Listening to the surrounding conversation, there is chatter about last weekend's big football win as well as the featured artists in the upcoming art festival.

Every corner turned and every street crossed, there is always U-M pride accompanied by a friendly and welcoming smile. The everlasting vibrance and passion for this town is unique to Ann Arbor, forming a close-knit community that sends out a message of inclusivity and establishes a common thread amongst all its members.

Coming from the large city of Miami Beach where doors are slammed in your face and there is no sense of togetherness, Ann Arbor shines in terms of school spirit and a welcoming environment. Most places lack a common thread that is powerful enough to unite people from all walks of life. No matter how old you are, the background you come from, or your role in the community, the sense of spirit here includes everyone. This creates a greater sense of community and belonging.



JORDAN SHEPPARD
U-M Student contributor

Something that every single person who visits or lives in Ann Arbor can confidently say is how apparent the love and spirit for the University of Michigan are, as well as for the town in general. This feeling stems from the university's values of Michigan Pride and Inclusivity, which are instilled in every individual as soon as they immerse themselves in the culture. Ann Arbor makes it simple to engage in its culture by highly encouraging and prompting all citizens to participate in the copious selection of events. Emanating from its values, the community inherently reflects the ideals of inclusivity and unity.

The values of society impact its culture and how the members of society act. The university and the town of Ann Arbor were built on traditions, innovation and excellence that lead every member of the

community to embrace all of what this place has to offer.

Shared values hold a community together. The idea that we are part of something larger than ourselves creates a collective effervescence that makes people feel part of a group, thus reinforcing the concept of unity. Ann Arbor emphasizes a zest for the University of Michigan, and this is a binding force that pulls every member of the community in and institutes a common ground for everyone.

A driven and passionate freshman, Nolan Werner, was born and raised a Wolverine, living forty-five minutes from campus his whole life and expressing his love for the university ever since he could talk. Nolan describes this feeling as a "comfortable, friendly, and fun" environment where he can walk down the street and always see 15 plus familiar faces that are always glowing and greeting him. Aside from the sporting events that he feels show the essence of this town, he also mentioned how there is a much deeper meaning to the events that physically bring us together. People who have settled in Ann Arbor "can connect on some level and can relate to one another. Locals and everyone in the community embrace the culture of Michigan." When the people who fall into typically unwelcomed minority groups are finally

encouraged to embrace such a dynamic culture, inclusivity is generated and unity outshines our differences.

The fervor for the university is not by any means exclusive to Michigan students; the town as a whole bleeds maize and blue as well. Mary Duerksen has lived in Ann Arbor for twenty-seven years, raising a family and becoming a local educator. Growing up in Adrian, Michigan, she had "always admired this elite university" and held in high esteem how this college town influences the spirits and behaviors of the people who inhabit it. As she used the words "pride, stimulating, and comfort" to describe the feeling that Ann Arbor brings to everyone, it crystallized how comfort is a common sensation that naturally occurs here. Duerksen also mentioned the luxury that her kids never realized they had growing up in such a cohesive town, "there's something here that connects people of so many different intellectual strengths and backgrounds and my kids do not realize how lucky they had it growing up in such a diverse community that offers so much."

Oftentimes, diversity in a community can, unfortunately, cause wedges that divide people of different statuses and roles. Not in Ann Arbor. The pride that

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➡ **TOWN** from page 2

and those experiencing homelessness have.

While it is easy for students to live in blissful ignorance, many fail to realize the effect this has not only on suffering individuals within their community but also on working to lessen the negative stigma surrounding homelessness.

I conducted interviews with Groundcover News vendors Joe Woods and Jay Gordon who consistently sell on the corner of Liberty and Main. Both vendors have at some point experienced homelessness, but even though they have since found stable housing, they continue to sell for Groundcover because of its goal to spread awareness

about homelessness and related issues. Both vendors asserted that the worst thing students can do is lie.

Woods reported that “people telling me no is part of my job. I’m a salesman, and I love what I do. If everyone were to say yes, I would be an operator just handing out newspapers, not a salesman.”

It’s disheartening for them to see students walk right by, ignoring them and creating excuses such as “I’m sorry I would donate, but I don’t have cash.” They both would prefer students outright say no.

They find it ridiculous when people don’t think they have smartphones and Venmo. “It’s 2021. I don’t even carry cash anymore,” Woods said.

A deterrent to students providing

help is the lack of financial ability to donate. For the most part, college students are not in a great financial position. This leads many to entirely avoid those experiencing homelessness. Jay stressed that he understands why students can’t always donate; his only wish is to be treated like a person and not lied to. Students need to hear this to avoid deepening the divide.

I spoke to my sister, Dani Nives, who recently stepped down as Interim Director for Salt Lake City’s largest homeless shelter. She emphasized how important language is when speaking about this population. She emphasized the person-first approach of stating “person experiencing homelessness” rather than “the homeless” because she believes these individuals

are people first, who just happen to be experiencing homelessness currently.

How did you react the last time you walked by an individual experiencing homelessness? Did you stop to talk, politely smile and walk by or ignore them entirely? Homelessness is a sad occurrence within the United States that no one should have to face, and being stigmatized hurts.

Instead of ignoring this problem, explore what you can do differently. While donations of money, time, food, clothing and more are always helpful, what most people fail to realize is that even minor behavior changes can make a big difference in the lives of all individuals within our community.

➡ **SPIRIT** from last page

locals feel for this university and the quintessence of spirit and togetherness integrates us all; this provides a common ground in which our differences are overlooked and our joint vivacity flows throughout the town.

Duerksen recounted a vivid memory of hers from 1997 that represents Michigan Pride at its finest. “During the debate of who won the national championship [Michigan or Nebraska] there was a team parade through Ann Arbor with the players hanging off the sides of a semi-truck and celebrating our victory.”

The parade itself was not the only illustration of the spirit of the town that day. In the brisk and freezing temperature of Midwest winter, everybody was still outside on their porches beaming with pride, epitomizing pure joy and celebration of the team’s success. It is during moments like these that neighbors look

around and realize how this love for the university and the town makes this place so special and has been doing so for generations.

The legacy and traditions of Ann Arbor build a foundation for the future by allowing students to maintain a balance and have a supportive environment. There is genuine care about every individual despite their story, race, gender or beliefs. This is demonstrated through all of the resources Ann Arbor provides to help those in need.

One issue that this town struggles with is homelessness and there are efforts that this community makes to bring light to this topic as well as help this group of people, like Groundcover News, HOPE clinic and the Delonis Center.

When speaking to Groundcover News vendor Jay about his experience with homelessness in Ann Arbor, he stated that “being homeless here is a lot easier

than being homeless in New Jersey.”

This alone makes it apparent that the sense of community is so strong here that even in adversity, there is always somebody here to help. This social fabric is sewn together by the commonality we all share in loving the town of Ann Arbor and all it has to offer.

The endless events throughout the year also accentuate a sensation of belonging by bringing the community together. From weekly football games to the annual Ann Arbor Art Fair that attracts visitors from all around the world, there is always something open to all members of the community. Additionally, walking through the Diag there is never a day when there is no booth promoting a certain cause, or a group of people conglomerating to learn about different issues.

There is never a fear of saying hello to a stranger. There is always a resource to

turn to when in need. This community has a desire to uplift one another and make every member feel part of something special.

Promoting unity and togetherness, Ann Arbor is a unique town that embraces people from all over and coalesces them with the pride and spirit of the university. Having this zest and enthusiasm is one of the most important forces when attempting to bring people together. Traversing the town of Ann Arbor for either the first or hundredth time, the feeling of inclusivity and school spirit reigns no matter where you are, who you are with, or what you are doing. The foundational elements that have been present throughout many generations continue to prevail and become even stronger. This encompasses the values of our community. This is Michigan.

➡ **STRESSED** from last page

that I was struggling with something.”

People are continually going to feel this way if society repeatedly treats mental health issues as they currently do. Everyone seems to be promoting mental health on social media and other areas in hopes of making an improvement, but saying and doing are two different things. If we actively work to change this stigma, hopefully, students like Sarah, who was initially afraid to get help, won’t be ashamed of improving their wellbeing. Getting help should be applauded rather than disparaged.

Another common misconception about mental health issues is that they are long-term. It’s common for people to struggle for as little as a month or as

long as numerous years, but every situation is one that needs to be addressed. Some people may face triggers, such as finals time, that prompt these issues to come forward for a shorter amount of time.

If you’re someone who stresses just around finals and only needs to get through the couple of weeks surrounding it, there are still plenty of actions you can take to help persevere through it. Rachel O’Conner, a health journalist, suggests that students unplug from social media and work on their time management. She recommends that “when you’re studying for finals, try to avoid social media for as long as possible. Maybe set a rule that you can only open those apps at a certain time of day to avoid undesirable outcomes ... and you can make the most of what-

ever time you do have.”

Jianette encourages everyone to keep in mind that “around finals, one thing that helps is remembering that everyone’s going through it, and getting in the habit of talking about how you feel with the people around you can be really helpful.”

This is great advice, but it’s what you do with that advice that matters. The only person who can ultimately improve your own well-being is you. Jianette said that “we all think of self-care as face masks and bubble baths, but self-care is just taking an hour or two out of your day and taking a walk, maybe just sitting down and giving yourself a mental break.”

Students struggling with mental health issues related to school have a variety of support resources available

at the University of Michigan. Students can reach out to CAPS or the University Psychological Clinic. The CAPS website has a wide variety of resources that are not just useful for students but for any person in need of help in nearly every aspect of their mental health journey. From anonymous help to group counseling, these services offer a wide range of support.

Being a senior at U-M, Jianette has a lot of experience regarding this topic and recommends that students “try to actively set time to check in with yourself and check-in with how you’re feeling and what’s going on in your life. Everyone can benefit from talking about it with other people but making time to check in with and prioritize yourself is the best advice I could give.”

The beauty and burdens of deafness

Meeting a new individual comes with the great difficulty of deciding if I should let them know that I am hard of hearing. I struggle because there's no guarantee whether they'll accept me or ridicule me. People often talk down to me, pity me and leave the conversation, or they tell me, *you don't look deaf* and *you don't sound deaf*. But, what do they mean by that? How does one look deaf? Is my voice not good enough for you?

Individuals of the Deaf community are tired of these comments that arise from false stereotypes of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. The Deaf community is a diverse community of people with various levels of hearing loss, individuals with and without hearing devices, the use of ASL and other sign languages, and supporting and educated allies.

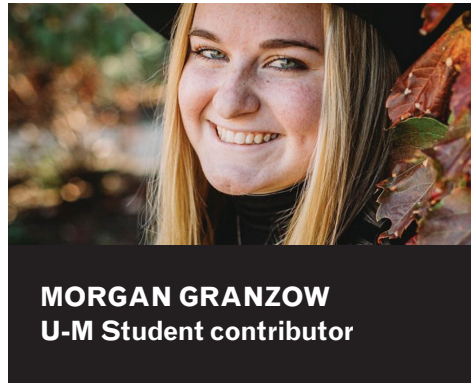
A majority of those comments stem from being uneducated and unaware of Deaf culture, causing a separation of the community from the rest of the world. In addition, society is unaware of the problems that Deaf individuals face, resulting in the lack of accommodations and ableism on a daily basis.

Deafness is not a curse nor a weakness. Moreover, deafness is only disabling because the hearing world makes it that way. In order to fix that, society needs to become more educated on the unique lives of the Deaf and hard of hearing. I hope to provide insight on Deaf culture and educate others on the common experiences that each individual faces.

Contrary to the stereotype that being deaf makes one incapable, individuals with hearing loss live completely independent and successful lives. Being deaf does not reduce one's intelligence or other skills. Despite being hard of hearing, I attended a fully hearing high school and graduated top of my class, allowing me admittance into the number one public university, the University of Michigan. There are hundreds of communities around the globe that allow the deaf to gather, share their similar experiences and support one another. Being deaf is not a bad thing, however, an audist society causes a variety of problems that make being deaf and independent extremely difficult.

As a hard-of-hearing college student, the most noticeable obstacles are inaccessible captioning, the mask mandate and lack of awareness of these issues. Although more and more videos will have closed captions, there are still a wide variety of places and situations that lack this feature. Whether it is on a homework assignment or at a movie theater without captions, most of the Deaf community struggles to follow.

Not only do some places not even enable captioning, but frequently the



captions are incorrect or incoherent. Locations such as the football stadium, apps and the news on TV may have captions, yet they are lagged, incorrect, and miss chunks of the conversation. Requesting captions is equivalent to a hearing person asking for audio; without it, we're clueless.

The lack of visual accommodations also affects daily life. I recently became aware that the dorms do not have flashing lights for emergency hazards such as a fire alarm. I discovered this while taking a shower, unaware of the alarm because there were no visuals to let me know what was going on. Without a visual signal, I depend on a hearing individual to aid me in situations such as these. This is a safety hazard to all students with hearing loss.

The pandemic has affected the Deaf community in an uncommon way that is rarely discussed in the media. Masks cover up the mouth, disabling lip-reading. In my personal experience, this has been the most difficult challenge and has taken a great toll on our education, our mental health and our daily lives. Due to the mask mandate, I have faced difficulty connecting with others and making accommodations, especially in a new city. Whether this was ordering at a restaurant, speaking with friends or running errands, it made simple tasks nearly impossible. All of these issues stem from a lack of knowledge.

In order to make society a more accessible community, we must raise awareness of the issues and change the stereotypes revolving around those with hearing loss. First and foremost, it is important to note that hearing devices are not cures for deafness, only aids. It is a common assumption that hearing aids and cochlear implants cure hearing loss and restore complete hearing; however, that is completely wrong. These devices help amplify missing sounds, but they are not perfect and with them comes a variety of issues. Many hearing devices cause listening fatigue and tinnitus, and they often malfunction. As a result, many prefer to use sign language, or some master the art of lipreading for communication.

When communicating with us, don't speak louder or over-enunciate when



we ask you to repeat yourself. This is unhelpful and makes lip reading more difficult! Instead, speak clearly and normally. One also must understand that lip reading is not like reading a book; it's a difficult skill to master and it may take time to understand what has been said. Therefore, we ask you to be patient and don't give up on us. The Deaf community wants to hear you as much as you want them to understand what you have said.

With that, stop using the term *hearing impaired*. Although it depends on the individual, many do not like the term hearing impaired because it implies that they are broken and being deaf is something that needs to be fixed. Instead, use the terms *Deaf* or *hard of hearing* because they reflect us as respected individuals, instead of objects that require repair. In addition, never say "I'm sorry!" What are you sorry for? By claiming you feel sorry, you tend to make us feel like there is something wrong with us, which is offensive and degrading. Most of us are proud and content with being deaf and we don't want pity. These remarks often stem from the lack of understanding of the community. With more education and representation, people will better understand us as individuals and refrain from ignorant statements.

The most essential thing is to better understand the community and culture as a whole. Ways you can help provide accessibility include learning ASL from Deaf educators such as Bill Vicars, following Deaf creators on social media, captioning your content, and engaging with individuals from the Deaf community.

Learning basic signs is always appreciated because it can make an interaction smoother and less stressful for both parties. You can learn to sign, we cannot learn to hear. Signs such as *how are you*, *can I help you*, *yes*, *no*, *I'm sorry*, *please*, *thank you*, and the alphabet are simple and easy to learn. Learning a new language can be difficult, but starting with

the basics is quick and appreciated. Even the smallest efforts make a difference and can help provide a more accurate perspective of the Deaf community and make society more accessible.

People often ask me, "would you choose to become hearing if you could?" The simple answer is no. Despite the frustrations, lack of accessibility and miseducation of my peers, I would not change a single thing because it is a gift to be a part of the Deaf community. The community has allowed me to be more confident and find self-love.

I am no longer afraid to show my hearing aids and talk about my experience with hearing loss. Being hard of hearing has allowed me to see the world with a new perspective and I would never change this part of my life. Hearing loss didn't ruin my life, it allowed my character to flourish, and without it, I wouldn't be the individual that I am today.

Every Deaf person has their own unique experience that will alter their perspective. We don't all share the same thoughts, same opinions or same opportunities. For example, not all Deaf individuals know how to sign. Without resources and accessibility, oftentimes Deaf children do not have the opportunity to be immersed in American Sign Language or the Deaf community. But that doesn't make them any less *deaf*.

The Deaf community is a rich group of individuals from all around the world with perspectives unique to their own experiences. There are over 300 different sign languages across the globe, as well as cultural and regional variants for signs. It is a blessing to have known the Deaf community and be a part of the uniqueness and beauty it holds.

With more deaf representation in the media, people could get a better understanding of the community and its challenges, resulting in a more accessible community. Becoming more educated will allow more respectful and enjoyable interactions between the deaf and the hearing, allowing a more connected community for all.

Racism: The true epidemic

“In the past, U-M students have written some nasty, racist things that attack their fellow students. The campus climate has somehow changed for the better, but racism still remains embedded in American society today.”

This statement comes from an interview I had with Will Shakespeare, a Groundcover News vendor who is very knowledgeable about community issues in Ann Arbor and around the world. He has put so much work into informing people of widespread problems, often looking at history in order to explain issues in the present day, and I thought he would be the perfect person to talk with about racism; how it manifests in our area and in our institutions.

Will advanced his initial statement by saying how prejudice has always been prevalent in society and that this concept most clearly manifests in the issue of racism. Sadly, Ann Arbor is not exempt, with the mayor even describing racism in Ann Arbor as a health crisis.

When Will was at the Shapiro Library, he once heard “African American students talking to each other, saying that they feel like they don’t belong at U of M.”

How horrible is this? As students both studying and living at the University of Michigan, they should practically be able to call this place their home. Yet, they feel they don’t belong here – why?

Will explained these students felt this way because of a mental health problem called racial trauma or race-based traumatic stress. Racial trauma is the ongoing result of racism, racial bias and exposure to racist media. Will further described the consequential mental health issues of racism. “The stress of racism can increase the likelihood of mental health diseases like depression and anxiety in both children and adults.”

An infamous event that led to racial trauma and stress from racism was the murder of George Floyd. Lesser known but hyper-local is the 2014 murder of Aura Rosser, a 40-year-old African American woman who was murdered by the police in Ann Arbor. Her boyfriend called the police on her, accusing her of domestic violence. When the police arrived, she had a knife in her



hand, and one of them tased her while his partner simultaneously shot her. The officers who murdered her were let off scot-free, with the rationale being that the killing was an act of self-defense on the part of the officers.

Will mentioned a 2020 survey that found Black people are five times more likely than white people to report unfair or discriminatory experiences with the police. It’s not hard to see why African Americans may distrust police.

African Americans and people of color also have reason to not trust in the healthcare system, for both mental and physical aspects of their health. Many African Americans with racial trauma may not even realize that they have some form of it and that they may need medical intervention to treat it. Racism becomes especially terrible when it is applied to healthcare, as in these scenarios, the problem may become a matter of life or death.

Racism in healthcare is very clearly illustrated in the diagnosis of health problems of African Americans and other people of color. Will noted how doctors in the past and even present have “misdiagnosed minority populations due to stereotypes, racial bias and false beliefs of certain diseases being associated with race.” Biases and stereotypes that doctors may hold can also lead to over and under-diagnosis of certain conditions and a lack of proper pain management, which may increase health risk, even when economic status is not a factor.

Will added a specific example of racism in healthcare — the Tuskegee experiment. In Tuskegee, Alabama in 1932 there was a large African American population with syphilis prevalent in the community. Researchers went to Tuskegee and tested 400 African American men for syphilis, but they didn’t tell them what they were testing for,



Will Shakespeare, vendor No. 258, has extensively researched racism and its effects on institutions and people.

and instead, they said that those who tested positive simply had “bad blood.” There was no treatment given to those who tested positive for syphilis, even long after treatment was available. This horrible experiment never would have happened if the test subjects were white. What happened here was a violation of the rule of informed consent, which led to the harm of patients who were diagnosed and potentially thousands more in the African American community, as syphilis is transmittable through generations. It is no wonder that minority groups distrust the healthcare system.

The governor of Michigan called this racial disparity in healthcare a “public health crisis.”

Racism has three main pillars. Structural/institutional racism, cultural racism and individual-level discrimination. Institutional racism is a main cause of persistent racism, instituting policies and procedures that have reduced access to housing, neighborhood and educational quality, employment opportunities and other desirable resources in the society to those experiencing it.

Cultural racism negatively impacts economic status and health when those affected experience hostile relationships and environments due to their race. Individual-level racism is either explicit or internalized racism that people express, and it leads to some of the same outcomes as cultural racism.

Minority groups can develop racially induced depression, anxiety or PTSD which could go untreated due to the aforementioned distrust they have in

healthcare. These mental illnesses could even propel people to use drugs or alcohol to deal with their psychological pain. The use of substances can also create or worsen existing physical health problems with lungs, livers, kidneys and more which results in a snowballing effect, which is especially lethal considering the pandemic.

Marginalized groups were hit extremely hard with Covid-19 and there are several reasons for this. Will stated how “the likelihood for Latinx people to die from Covid-19 was more than two times that of the likelihood of white people, and the likelihood of Black people dying from Covid-19 was approximately 3.6 times higher than that of white people.”

The explanation for this trend lies in the cumulative repercussions of racism in society and a direct racial bias that healthcare workers have against marginalized groups. These marginalized groups often make the most contact with Covid-19 as they may have to work whatever job they can due to their lack of job opportunity. Covid-19 exposed how marginalized groups may contract illness more easily and also be more prone to death due to racism in healthcare.

Racism in general is an issue that we should not avoid talking about because it only furthers the divide between us and the progression to a fully happy, healthy society. We have to take charge and address this health crisis just as we have attacked the health crisis of COVID-19 — except the problem of racism in healthcare is broader in scope.

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Visit Bopjib Korean Restaurant to taste “the love for good food” that owner Cassandra Knisely puts in every dish — whether it be Bulgogi (left), Yaki Mandu (middle) or Bibimbop (right). Food images sourced from Bopjib online menu.

Food and free expression: from Korea to Ann Arbor

“Here at Bopjib, we use only the finest ingredients to create homemade dishes you’re sure to love.”

A key to reducing college stress: comfort food at the tip of your fork. Bopjib is a Korean restaurant in Ann Arbor that attracts citizens of all ages. Cassandra Knisely owns and operates this “rice house” at 621 Church Street, right next to the University of Michigan campus. Cassandra created Bopjib in 2014. I was grateful for the opportunity to interview her about her heritage, why she moved to Ann Arbor, how she faced the struggles of owning a restaurant during the pandemic, and where her love for food was rooted.

Cassandra was born in Seoul, Korea. In 1986, she came to the United States as a 26-year-old immigrant. Cassandra recalled, “We left Korea because it was a good opportunity, and I wanted to come, it was a given to me.”

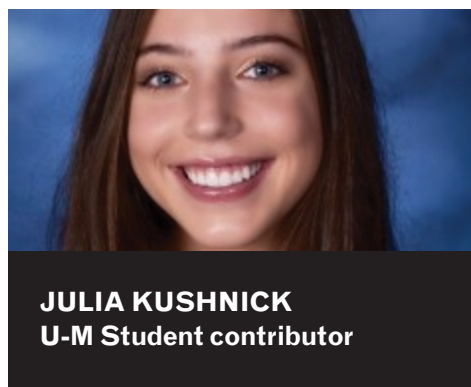
She arrived in Los Angeles with her parents and sisters, but after despising her living arrangements, Cassandra moved to Chicago to live with her sister who already had a home there.

“LA was not what I expected to see in the U.S.,” Cassandra confessed. “LA felt similar to one of the slum towns in South Korea. That was probably because the [part of] town we moved to was the Korean town my mom felt comfortable with.”

Although LA was not Cassandra’s dream image of America, she highlighted why it felt so easy to leave home.

“Back then, being in Korea, men were suppressing women. They always told us whether to go this way or that way. Now, I’ve heard that it’s totally changed,” Cassandra said.

Cassandra and her family have a comfortable tight-knit bond that was abnormal in Korean culture. She illustrated that “back then as a woman, you couldn’t even laugh loud, but in my household that was never a problem. So, my laugh was so loud in public and everyone would stare at me. I hated it! I did not like the system.” Cassandra reflected that when she came here, no one cared as much about what she was



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doing.

When Cassandra visited Korea in 1988, she felt lost even in her hometown. It was completely different. Cassandra explained that when living in Korea, citizens were fighting for democracy and against dictatorship. She felt that since the two years she had been in the states, her native country had progressed.

Cassandra and her husband (from Ohio) met when she first arrived in Chicago. After marriage, he got a job in Buffalo, New York, and the couple raised their children there for nine years. After, they moved to Cleveland for two years, and then finally ended up in Ann Arbor in 1998. Cassandra and her husband still often visit LA and Korea to see her family.

Cassandra is well-traveled and has met many different types of people which has influenced her perspectives on diversity and racism. Cassandra has faced Anti-Asian discrimination specifically against her, but her experiences with travel have made her more nonchalant about this issue.

In the 1990s, Cassandra, her husband, and their three children went to brunch in Beverly Hills. The moment her family sat down, a waitress proceeded to make disgusted faces at their table. While laughing about this experience, Cassandra also exclaimed that she had heard the phrase “go back to where you came from” multiple times. I was confused with how she was so casual about this upfront racism. She immediately laughed and said, “Who cares!” Thankfully, she has never been faced with this hatred since moving to Ann Arbor.

Cassandra takes pride in her Asian heritage and likes to stay in touch with her culture, which is what rooted her passion for a career in the kitchen.

“I love to cook, I love food, and I love good food,” Cassandra stated.

Cassandra explained that she wants to “feel heart” in food, whether she’s cooking it or eating it. When raising her children, Cassandra felt that cooking was a joy for her. She had always been seeking to create a restaurant, but it never came to fruition until seven years ago. Cassandra describes her job in such a positive light and still manages to display optimism when speaking about the pandemic’s effect on Bopjib.

On March 16, 2020, Bopjib closed down because of a government order and Cassandra admitted that that was hard, and she did not know what to expect. She decided to leave Ann Arbor in May, after weeks of sitting home (and getting bored of growing vegetables), to go on a road trip to Arizona. She ended up staying there with her mom for three months and reopened Bopjib in August for pick-up and to-go orders.

Now in 2021, however, Bopjib feels more normal than it ever has. The restaurant finally opened indoor dining again, and attracts students from the University of Michigan every day. My friends and I visit the restaurant once every other week to taste many of the dishes on the extensive menu.

My first experience at Bopjib is one that I will never forget. I walked under a light blue tent to enter a restaurant that smelled of homemade cooking. With two of my friends, I sat down at one of the wooden tables and scanned a code with my phone. A multitudinous list of delicious-sounding dishes was displayed. Eager to try it all, I settled on the shin beef bone ramen and yaki mandu chicken dumplings. My feast of traditional Korean food was placed in front of me 15 minutes later. The smell of sweet vegetables and meat immediately inched up my nose and I was ready to take my first bite.

The ramen was incomparable to any noodle soup I had tried before. After weeks of making “Cup Noodles” in my dorm room, the taste of this dish was a cultural shock. The noodles melted in my mouth from the warmth of the beef broth, and the meat was cooked to perfection. It tasted spicy and fresh. Priced for \$9, I rate this dish a 9.2 out of 10.

My first bite into one of the dumplings felt like I was floating on cloud nine. The dough was soft and puffy with a texture that makes me smile just thinking about it. Even better, the chicken inside of the dumpling was sweet and salty. It is the perfect dish to share with friends, and Cassandra says that this is her favorite of the meals she prepares. Priced for \$7.50, I rate this dish a 9.8 out of 10.

Cassandra’s main goal for the future of Bopjib is to expand the restaurant. She already brings her food every Wednesday to Pierpont Commons on North Campus. Pierpont is a U-M student union with shops and restaurants. It has a fireside café that allows two vendors to bring their food each day to sell to students and faculty. A few years ago, Cassandra learned that there were no Korean restaurants selling food at Pierpont and she achieved her dream to be the first one to do so.

Cassandra says that her favorite part about working in a college town is the energy. “It’s so vibrant! There is so much energy, young energy, good energy,” exclaimed Cassandra.

Cassandra loves being surrounded by kids because they remind her of her own three children. She reflected that the students at the University of Michigan are “very intelligent and nice, but I can always tell whether they are lying or telling the truth to me. They call me the Michigan mom!”

Cassandra has displayed strength and determination throughout her move to the United States, including maintaining a business during the pandemic. I encourage all Ground-cover readers to support Cassandra by trying the food from Bopjib. You will not be disappointed!